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The Black Cat

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Ten Cents

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Love's Reconstruction.*

BY MARY MORRISON RAYNAL.

IN the shady seclusion of the yellow jessamine arbor sat old Mrs. Webster, gazing out into the sunbaked garden. There snowball bushes were drooping beneath their weight of bloom, fleshy pomegranate blossoms flamed a defiant response to the sun, the piercing sweetness of syringa and jessamine struck dominant notes in the harmony of sweet odors. She noted the number of long-buried and forgotten bulbs, which, this spring, had struggled back to life, but failed to note that the Italian symmetry of the old garden found its counterpart in the precision and gentle stateliness which characterized her as a vanishing product of the Old South.

On the floor at her feet sprawled her little servant, Amen, sleepily conning his lesson. Amen, smuggled into the house by his mother, Malinda, had, from the time he could toddle, constituted himself the attendant of old Mrs. Webster.

"I don't care how full your quiver is, Malinda, just so you keep 'em out of sight," she had cautioned her ebony cook.

Malinda, apparently, had aspired to an overflowing quiver; but, her enthusiasm flagging with the ninth squirming bundle, she had christened it Amen, and considered the service closed.

Amen speedily developed so many infantile allurements, that the

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desolate old mistress of the house melted at sight of him, and Malinda, quick to read the signs, kept the child with her more and more openly, until he had become an established factor in the household.

Grown a little older now, he was the vital connection between the outside world and old Mrs. Webster, whose wintry heart found easement in the life drama enacted around her.

So uncanny was her knowledge of everything that went on in their midst, that the neighbors vowed she kept a telescope in one of her upper chambers, and therefrom spied on them at her leisure. The day had come, however, when she had no thought but for her own decrepit heart-strings. Amen had tumbled down the garden walk bristling with news:

"A quare ole man's struck town, dey call 'im Bill Johnson."

Mrs. Webster had fixed him with startled eyes, then shut herself into her own room, quivering with memories of a dead pain, fear of pain to come. She turned a deaf ear to the dinner-bell and various rappings on her door.

"I never knowed her to have sich er spell," protested Malinda, thoroughly alarmed.

"Maybe she's daid!" hazarded Amen, in delicious excitement. Holding their breath to listen they heard her stifled weeping.

It was hours before she opened her door to call Amen, who stared with a child's frank curiosity at her tear-swollen face. Tremulous, and apologetic even to her little servant, she gave him a note, impressing upon him the importance of a reply.

Speeding away in quest of the queer old stranger, Amen found him presently on the Court Square.

Old Bill Johnson was, in his person, a living refutation of the theory that a curved line is a line of beauty. He was made up of curves, round body, round face, round china blue eyes, staring helplessly into vacancy.

His home-coming had called forth a storm of reminiscences. A few, there were, who remembered him, dashing, debonair, but that was long ago, before he had gone out into that indefinite country, the West, where he had been enveloped in shadow, and where, like Kipling's Fool, some of him had lived but the most of him died.

Shambling now across the Court Square he was stopped by a little darky who held up a note. At sight of the writing, tremulous though it was, a wave of memories swept him back into the past, and the past was the best known country to old Bill Johnson. Breaking the seal with his poor clumsy fingers he read Mrs. Webster's invitation to dine with her on the following day.

At an unceremoniously early hour Bill Johnson shuffled up the box-bordered walk, a gleam of his lost youth returning at sight of the familiar gray house, but he did not recognize the old lady who opened the door for him until her voice, low and breaking with tenderness, reached his ear. She in her turn felt rather than saw his shabbiness and helplessness, and the pity of it all wrung her heart. She led him into the parlor, and sitting once more together on the haircloth sofa, he and she, each saw in the other's eyes the ghost of a dead self.

After Bill Johnson left, Mrs. Webster sat long alone in the darkening parlor. The shadows wavered in like the spirits of dead hopes and fears, the village street was hushed save for an occasional hurrying footstep. Through the open window came the faint chirp, chirp, of sleepy little chickens under the mother wing.

A soul crisis had gripped the old lady, life stood before her stripped of illusion and God-given blindness, a grim stark thing of duty to be shirked or vanquished. The motherhood she had never known rose up in yearning pity over the ghost of the girl she had been,— the girl whose heart had been buried during those far-away sob-racked nights and dreary smiling days. A deeper pity shook her for the man whose beautiful youth had been thus crucified.

When, finally, she went out to her solitary tea she walked as one in a dream.

Old Bill Johnson came again and yet again. The jessamine arbor offered to him a haven of unutterable peace. Mrs. Webster was always there, sometimes busied with a bit of housekeeping, stoning cherries or shelling peas with tremulous white fingers, oftener with a book in her lap, and Amen rolling at her feet in throes of educational anguish. But she always had time to listen to Bill Johnson's halting reminiscences, or to divert him with talk of their youth. At sound of familiar names a brief light of recognition would glimmer in his face, but even then his uncer-

tainty was painful to see. Once, upon a reference of hers to her long dead husband, he had inquired colorlessly :

" You became fond of him ? "

" Very ! " flashed back the old lady with wifely loyalty, then mournfully, " but I did not realize it until after he was gone."

Resolutely banishing pain from her face she began to speak of a new poet in whom she had found much diversion.

" I had many books once," the old man babbled, apologetically, " bits of them come to me now," his voice trailed off into the lines :

" Earth seemed a desert I was bound to traverse
Seeking to find the familiar faces."

"And then I found you, Abigail, and I knew I'd reached home at last."

Lulled by the droning of the bees in the jessamine vine, old Bill Johnson nodded in the midst of their talk. Mrs. Webster sat regarding him with sombre questioning in her eyes. If she had married this man, she with her virile strength of character, he with his loving plastic nature, what fulfilment of fair promises might not life have held for him ? She had tried to choke down all memory of him, but his spirit had walked beside her through the years, a dead gentle thing since youth's fires had burned themselves out.

She had believed that all emotion lay behind her, that the budding of roses and the frosting of chrysanthemums alone marked for her the change of season. And now, without warning, this ghost had arisen from the mists of oblivion to haunt her. She recognized afresh the futility of having bartered for worldly ease her woman's heritage of self-abnegation.

The stormy questionings of youth have no place in life's Indian Summer days. The old lady was not strong enough to wrestle with them. As summer gave place to winter her friends began to mark her failing. A few, and they the oldest, began to whisper of an early attachment between Mrs. Webster and Bill Johnson. They even went so far as to hint that she was brooding over having jilted him. The rumor of his daily visits reached the village, the whisper gained force and spread.

On a dreary February day the old lady's friends were requested to come to her at six o'clock. They put white heads together,

they exclaimed, they "reckoned" this, and they "reckoned" that.

"It can't be possible?"

"No, it's preposterous!"

In the gloaming of that day a pair of young lovers strolled past the gray house. The mists had wrapped it round, giving it a strange aloofness, the elms shivered as they waved bare arms above it, and pale little jonquils nodded and whispered wisely.

"And so the old lady is to be married again," chuckled the young fellow. "What can those old mummies know of love? Of course it is a blessed thing for Bill Johnson, keeps him off the county, but as for Mrs. Webster, well truly she must be insane!"

The girl's eyes drooped, her lips twitched into a tremulous smile, being a discreet little woman she did not tell him the half that was in her heart. So he did not know that she was trying to picture him aged, shabby, forsaken, that she was whispering in her heart:

"How splendid of Mrs. Webster! I hope I could do the same if I were in her place."

Expectantly the invited guests hustled around to the grey house to be received by Amen's expansive smile. In the parlor the rector, whose father had read the old lady's first marriage service, was already enthroned on the sleekest of the haircloth chairs. The first crackle of conversation subsiding, a palpitating silence fell upon them, broken finally by one old soul, voicing in her neighbor's deaf ear the fear that Bill Johnson had forgotten to come. The ghastly significance of this remark, repeated twice in crescendo, at last struck home.

"No, my dear, no! He's been here an hour, came in a carriage, the extravagant old creature."

Then they agreed that Abigail's common sense must have asserted itself, leading to a repentance of this proposed folly. The rector, with his immense young dignity to maintain, was dumb at first, but the suspense becoming unbearable be beckoned Amen, bidding him remind his mistress that they were waiting. The bent figures in the black gowns nodded approval.

Amen, clattering up the steps, pounded on her door. Slowly

it opened, revealing a pitiful attempt at bridal finery. Her face was gleaming with a wondrous light. The old lady had come unto her own.

"William," she called tenderly, "William, are you ready?"

And as old Bill Johnson shambled from out the shadows of the hall, they heard him murmur: "Dearie, I've been ready for forty years!"

Which?*

BY ROBERT CARLTON BROWN.

HICH would you rather have, a matter-of-fact little love story that could happen, or an elemental love story in which passion plays a part — a story that *did* happen?" asked the young writer with the prominent forehead.

"Well," mused the keen, businesslike editor, "the people like both. With the first no risk is run and there's always some enjoyment. With the second somebody is apt to be offended, and a story dealing with the primitive passions may leave a bad taste in the mouth. As you ask, I might suggest that you show me both. Have you either of them with you?"

"Yes, here is the little love story," answered the young man, proffering a neatly folded manuscript.

"It's quite short, suppose you wait and I'll run over it now," said the editor, going through the following with accustomed rapidity:

THE LOVE STORY

They lived a secluded, cloistered life; just two little humans can be tucked away in most any odd corner of this old earth. As it happened, the Smith girls lived a mile from town — a decent, church-going little town in Missouri.

Everybody said it was a pretty romance from the moment it started, and everybody was happy that he had chosen Martha Smith, for she was the elder of the sisters by seven years. Dorothy was only twenty and some wondered why the new minister had not been attracted to her first of all, through the natural magnetism of youth and beauty.

Of course the girls were different, no two people can be alike;

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and possibly it was the sweet seriousness of Martha which appealed to Reverend Holborn; the innate femininity that she expressed. She was one of those "lavender and old lace" women who wear their "morning faces" all day long and to whom self-sacrifice is natural. She was the kind of girl to make a refreshing, cool background to an earnest man's life. Love-faith glowed in her spiritual eyes. She was feminine to the purest degree; of the old school, when women listened to the only natural call they knew, that of motherhood.

Dorothy might have been the belle of the town, had she not lived so far out and had she not found Martha so companionable. She had gone East to school, through the kindness of an aunt, whose sudden death had cut off Dorothy's income and compelled her to return and take up life again with Martha in the old homestead, on the slender income left by her parents.

Hereditary aristocracy is everywhere a great factor, and the girls maintained alone the same station their family had held. The new minister was the first person who really fitted in with their quiet ways of living. He was young and earnest, good-looking and agreeable.

Taking up his new duties in a methodical way, he began the routine of weekly calls on his congregation. It was in his official capacity that he first went to the Smith girls' home. He seemed charmed with their sober scheme of life and the length of time between his calls was soon cut in half.

When he began running out to dine with them every Friday night the good wives of the town mentioned it to each other with knowing smiles and sometimes Martha would receive a good-natured sally on the point. It always caused a proud thrill to shiver through her and she could never exactly register the feeling.

He was Adam to Martha. Her up-bringing had been severe. She was really reared for an old maid, such as she had almost become; but Nature revolted, for the woman was *born* a wife.

Town society said that Martha and the minister were only postponing their marriage until his salary should be raised, and they worked hard trying to collect a fund to help along the match.

As it was, a year passed and the Reverend Holborn continued his regular calls. People watched the couple at church fairs

and picnics; it was such a pretty romance. While both denied that any engagement existed, every one saw that Martha's eyes were more tender than they had been, and while Reverend Holborn entered into the games with zest and seemed to pay more attention to Dorothy, every one winked at it, knowing that a young man in love will go far out of his way in an effort to disguise his feelings. At these times Martha always stood by and watched her sister and lover with motherly eyes — such motherly eyes.

The bond of faith between the well-matched couple showed plainly in Martha's expression. She had passed through another stage and come out radiant. Her smile was tender; she took on a fuller beauty and it was easy to read a greater content in her face.

Holborn already had a brotherly bearing toward Dorothy, and often Martha would turn from her place at the piano and look up at the pair with those love-laden eyes of hers, as they stood singing together, the minister's arm dropped carelessly about the younger girl's waist. Sometimes Dorothy felt his attitude was a bit too brotherly, but he was so open about it that she could not bring herself to resent the familiarity.

At last Martha's life was full. He had confessed his love and she had shyly told him of hers. The only obstacle to immediate marriage was the long wait for the salary raise. Meantime Martha lavished her love almost equally on Holborn and Dorothy, and the two became more and more intimate, under her encouragement.

Then came the first snag in the smooth current of their lives. Reverend Holborn had a chance to leave the ministry and go into business in New York. It was a temptation for him, and, in spite of Martha's arguments against it — she was born to religion and looked upon his calling as the greatest God had given — he took up the matter by correspondence.

Those were anxious days in the little Smith house. Martha and he had long discussions concerning it, and the thought of losing him for even a short time lashed Martha's passion into flame. His had already reached that stage through accumulation, during the enforced long engagement.

Martha had never had the slightest fear that Holborn was attracted to her younger sister in any but a brotherly way. But Dorothy's experience at school had developed her beyond her elder sister and she felt intuitively that she must be careful. However, during this uneasy period she became convinced that Holborn's love for her sister was steadfast. The two were together much and the love light in Martha's eyes grew more soft and clinging, while Holborn was so wrapped up in her that he hardly noticed Dorothy.

A week is a long time in which to play with Fate. Martha went to church at the end of that restless week and sat with parted lips listening to his strong sermon. The thought that she was going to lose him, that he would go into commerce and dull all that was spiritual in him seared her very soul.

He drove home with her to dinner, which Dorothy had gone ahead to prepare.

"I'll get the position by to-morrow, darling," he told her softly, his voice carrying the true lover's ring. "Then we'll not wait longer. You'll go to New York with me. We'll be married at once — and then we'll begin to live!"

She clung to her wish for him to stay in the ministry and begged him earnestly not to take the position if it were granted him; but Holborn had already placed that matter in the hands of Fate.

That afternoon Martha went upstairs after dinner to get a book the trio had been reading aloud together. When she came down she noticed that Dorothy and Holborn were sitting opposite each other, their heads very close together. At her entrance they started, the tensity of their pose snapped, and Martha's eyes, keen with a new sense, found a strange glow on Dorothy's cheek, for which she could not account; Holborn, too, looked up at her with eyes that were for the moment the least bit unsteady.

Jealousy is an unjust little beast that can see very little in the broad sunglow of love, but when the slightest shadow creeps in, its vision becomes remarkably acute and it leaps to conclusions with wonderful bounds.

In that instant Martha felt sure she saw something clearly, something that had never occurred to her before. As a matter

of fact, had she but known it, the guilty looks on the young peoples' faces were due solely to the discussion of her welfare, which she had interrupted; Dorothy had just remarked how the last week of suspense had begun to show upon Martha.

In their innocence, the young couple thought nothing of the slight change that crept into Martha's voice as she spoke to them. Each of them was interested in *her* only.

She excused herself early in the evening and went to her room. Dorothy divined that something was the matter and followed. She found Martha sorting over some clothes and humming a little song, which had been started only the moment she had heard her sister's foot-steps on the stairs.

"What is it, Martha? Have you quarrelled?" queried Dorothy, at a loss to know what had brought on the sudden change.

Martha forced a laugh, placed her arm tenderly about her sister and drew her close.

"No, Dorothy," she breathed, and her voice came from deep down within her. "Nothing is the matter. He is the most wonderful of men; remember that, always remember that."

Something in the finality of her tone caused Dorothy to query, with a hysterical little laugh:

"Why should you ask *me* to remember that? He is nothing to me."

The nervous laugh and the quick reply were not overlooked by the little beast called Jealousy and the conclusion reached was quickly telegraphed to Martha's mind.

In spite of that, the woman in her had the upper hand and she kissed Dorothy good-night with a power of love that tugged at her heart and Dorothy felt with wonder the strength of love only a true woman can give.

Next morning when Dorothy went early to her sister's room she found it empty, the bed had not been touched. She looked in vain for a note and during her search found that Martha had taken a suit-case full of clothes and half the house money, which had been received the week before.

She had left no note, no word of any kind. All Dorothy could find was a scattering of torn bits of paper in and around the waste-basket. She pieced the scraps together and made out the

following lines — scratched and blotted in a dozen places:

"DEAREST DOROTHY:

"You both have — no, promise me, don't — don't ever — ever marry him. I knew it all the time. You are so young, so pretty. Yes, take each other. Be happy together. Forget me. I knew real happiness would never be for me."

Across the whole indistinct effort was this line, thrice repeated, in large letters:

"He said he loved *me*."

It was a pitiful human document. Dorothy wept long over it; understanding her sensitive sister so well, she blushed at having read the uncompleted note. With the shame crept in a horrible truth, the truth that stood out stark in the fragment. Martha had gone away thinking that Holborn and her sister had discovered that they loved each other. In a sudden flash of memory, the girl recalled the situation that afternoon when Martha had come upon them suddenly.

What made it truly horrible was that she and Holborn cared absolutely nothing for each other and the thing could have been easily explained to anybody — anybody except Martha, with her sensitive, shrinking soul, and her faculty for self-sacrifice.

Dorothy sent for the man at once and told him her theory of Martha's disappearance, without mentioning the patched note. He doubted that Martha could believe them in love with each other. That could not be, he reiterated, it must be something else. Surely if Martha suspected he had been attracted to her sister she would have said something to him and not gone away until she had made sure. It must be something else, he maintained. But Dorothy assured him that Martha understood self-sacrifice as no one else and had gone away to leave them together.

It was a horrible thought for the man to bear, to be with night and day. He began to see that this might have been the cause of her flight. No man could ever understand a woman, particularly if he was in love with her.

Two months dragged by; Holborn had lost the opportunity of the position in New York and was forced to struggle along on his thin salary in the little Missouri town, thinking of naught else but Martha.

He sought solace in Dorothy and for a long time they schemed

and planned how to find Martha, explain, and bring her back. But nothing was learned.

Daily Reverend Holborn's anxiety grew. He worked harder, reaching out for more and more work to employ his time, to lessen the length of the depressing intervals of reminiscence.

Gossip never quite got the story. The secret was locked up between Dorothy and Reverend Holborn. The news was circulated that Martha had left unexpectedly to visit a friend in the West. As the girl had no other friends than those in the little town where she had grown up to natural womanhood, society wondered, but no further explanation came.

Over half a year slipped by and the only two in the secret began to give up hope of Martha's return. They had been unable to get the slightest trace of her.

Reverend Holborn tried to pick up the end of his broken life string, but it continually evaded him, and he threw all his efforts into saving souls and preaching thundering sermons that brought the people from miles around to hear. Dorothy often thought how those sermons would have thrilled Martha, had she been there to hear.

It was only a few weeks after they had begun to give up Martha's return that Dorothy burst into the church one afternoon, where Holborn was superintending a change in the altar, to be ready for his sermon next day.

She waved a bit of paper triumphantly in her hand.

"She's coming back! She's coming back!" the girl cried in an ecstasy of joy.

Reverend Holborn snatched the paper and devoured the following hurried scrawl:

"DEAREST DOROTHY:

"I'm coming back. I can't stand it alone any longer. Don't tell *him*. MARTHA."

"I just had to tell you!" cried the girl. "I couldn't keep it from you. My eyes would have told you if my tongue had been cut out. To think that she's coming back of her own accord. She can't be alone without you any longer."

The man had almost collapsed. It had been a long hard struggle for him. Dorothy could read only one thing in his manner.

He was clinging to the altar for support — like a man who finds happiness almost too great to bear. His face was uplifted and there was a yearning appeal in his spiritual eyes — Dorothy knew he was trying to find expression for his joy.

She helped him.

"Won't it be fine!" she enthused. "I'll be her maid of honor, and we'll have the wedding right here in your own church. Now you've got your raise. Oh, it's too good to be true! Martha is coming back, *coming back of her own accord.*"

* * * * * * *

"Well?" said the editor, looking up curiously at the young writer when he had finished reading the above.

"What's the trouble? Don't you understand the story?" queried the other.

"Oh, yes. It's fair, just a little matter-of-fact story. But it's too slight. The reader wants to know more. Did Martha come back? And it's not exactly clear whether the minister was glad she was coming back or not."

"Isn't that implied in the finish?" asked the writer.

"Yes, that part isn't bad. But *did* Martha come back? You've got to be a little more explicit."

"The story won't do then just as it is, for a matter-of-fact little love story?"

"No, I'm afraid not. You spoke of another love story; a story with a bit of passion in it. Maybe you'd better send that in. I'd probably like it better. This seems a bit too slight."

The young fellow reached into his breast pocket and brought out half a sheet of narrow paper, closely typewritten; he handed it to the editor silently.

"What's this?" was the surprised question.

"It's the other story I spoke of."

With a curious look in his eyes the editor read the following:

THE OTHER STORY

"Martha is coming back," several of the good town's-people greeted each other next morning on their way to church, to hear Reverend Holborn preach one of his big sermons.

The news had got out in some way and every one was expectant. The town was agog with curiosity and anticipation, for Martha was well liked and she had been gone so long and mysteriously.

There was a noticeable change in Holborn. He was masterful in his sermon that morning. He threw his very soul into the work of salvation. He hurled heartfelt warnings to those who trespassed against the natural laws of God. He preached the shame of sin, glowing with his work, his audience enthralled. He urged the remedy of confession for the sins of flesh and spirit, for the sins of sacrilege and love. It was the strong sermon of a great revivalist. The town drunkard, dragged to church by his tremulous old mother, twitched uneasily in his seat, his eyes roving consciously. As his eyes became red-rimmed and finally moist his mother held hard to her hope — he might yet go to the front, confess, and ask —

Reverend Holborn had reached his climax; now, dripping with perspiration, he thrust his open hands toward the audience, crying beseechingly:

"'Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden. Bring your burdens of sin and lay them at my feet.'"

At that moment there was a stir in the rear of the room. Every one hoped it would be the town drunkard coming forward. Instead, a little woman in a heavy gray shawl drawn closely about her chin, who had slipped in unnoticed, gave a sharp, short cry and rushed down the aisle.

Every eye in the congregation, motionless in breathless awe, was fixed magnetically on the woman as she stopped abruptly before the altar, tugged at something in her shawl and then quickly and silently laid a little white bundle at Reverend Holborn's feet.

Wheeling around, she pulled off the heavy wrap and faced the congregation defiantly. To the horror of everybody present the face of Martha Smith was revealed. But it was a different face; dead white and fixed, an insane light leaped in her eyes — the eyes that had been motherly.

She looked at them shamelessly, there was a glint in her eyes, a flinty glint.

The divine, whose tongue clove to the roof of his parched mouth, and whose face had settled into hideous creases as though carved from death-white marble, stood like a stricken man.

Then it was that the congregation realized why the Reverend Holborn thundered out sermons of salvation and entreaty to God. Then it was that the outraged congregation realized that Martha had come back.

* * * * * * *

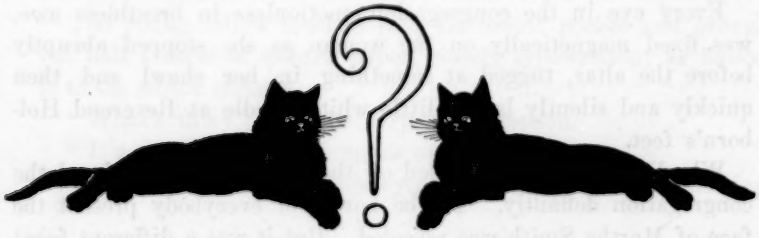
As the editor finished the tight little twist in which his lips had been drawn relaxed slowly; he shot a quick, keen glance at the young writer.

"The end was unexpected?" asked the writer, anxiously.

"Yes — and startling —"

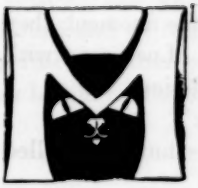
"But you —"

"Well, —" the editor picked up the final half sheet of typewriting and read it through again, without another word. Then he nodded his head measuredly. "The first story is too slight," he said, "and the second one too powerful; but they will serve to balance each other if printed together and —" he broke off short and gazed frankly, earnestly into the young writer's glowing face," — well, *I* think it *ought* to be published, because it is an accurate and impressive illustration of one of the truths of life and love. Yes, I'll take it."



The Man Higher Up.*

BY ALFRED L. HUTCHINSON.



ISS LILLIAN TOMPKINS was in a most embarrassing position. Many a fair lassie has two strings to her bow, but it is rarely that a maiden has two beaux of equal importance to her heart strings. That was what troubled Miss Tompkins.

Tom and Jerry, as her rival lovers were known, were equally acceptable to her, but reason as she would, she found herself utterly unable to make a choice.

Stranger still, the rivals remained the best of friends.

But, as she lived in an enlightened country where the penalties of polyandry are severe, they realized the necessity of an agreement, by which one must stand aside; and it was left to Miss Lillian, herself, to suggest a way out of the three-cornered dilemma. It proved a most perplexing problem for her to solve, but she gave each an equal chance.

"On the first day of June, I shall be at my uncle's farm in Idyl Wyld, which, as you both know, is about one hundred and twenty miles distant. You shall each start from my home here at precisely ten o'clock on the morning of that day. The one who reaches me first prepared to have the marriage ceremony performed, shall be my choice."

Such was the decree of Miss Lillian, and the two lovers agreed to respect it.

Idyl Wyld was a small, new settlement, which had become widely known because of the trout streams in its vicinity, and Lillian was attracted to it as her wedding goal by reason of its romantic name and picturesque environments. It was far from any railway station, and the highways leading to it were as yet mere timber roads, and in the spring-time almost impassable.

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A few minutes before ten o'clock on the eventful day, the rivals met in front of the home of Miss Tompkins. Like two gladiators entering the arena, they shook hands and then at the stroke of the town clock each mounted his bicycle and cut loose for the court-house. It had been stipulated in Lillian's decree that a marriage license should not be applied for until after the race had begun, and as each arrived at the court house the same moment they drew cuts to see which should be served first. Luck was with Jerry, who lost no time in making known his mission.

"I want a marriage license, Mr. Clerk, please."

The blank which the official handed him was hurriedly filled out, signed, and returned with the proper fee.

"You need a witness to this application, some one who knows you," directed the clerk.

"Here, Tom, just witness this," demanded Jerry of his friend, who stood near waiting his turn.

Tom complied with the request, the license was issued and Jerry made way instantly.

"I want a license, too," demanded Tom, who duly made out his application and returned it to the clerk.

"You, also need a witness," said the latter, without examining the document.

Tom looked about for Jerry, but he was already out of sight. In the meantime the clerk had read the application, and noting that the bride was the same in each continued, "never mind, a witness won't do you any good. I can't issue a license."

"Why not?" questioned Tom in astonishment.

"You have applied for a license to wed Miss Lillian Tompkins, and I have just issued a license for the marriage of the same lady to another man."

"What difference does that make?" queried Tom, impatiently.

"It makes this difference. The laws of this country do not permit a woman to have two husbands at the same time."

"True," exclaimed Tom, "but the laws of this country do not prohibit you from issuing a license to one hundred men to marry the same woman at the same time."

"Here," eagerly seizing the arm of a legal friend who had just entered, "is my witness and I want the license as applied

for, and I want it quick. You are wasting my very valuable time."

"How is it, Mr. Lawyer?" asked the clerk.

"Tom is right. It is your duty to issue a license properly applied for."

Upon this advice the application was witnessed, the license issued and delivered, but the parley of the clerk had given Jerry a full ten minutes' start. Nevertheless, Tom laughed in his sleeve as he placed the document in his pocket.

* * * * * * *

There had come to the city a short time previously, a professional aviator, who gave public exhibitions in his up-to-date flying machine.

"Will the bird-man agree to make a flight to Idyl Wyld with me as a passenger?"

This was the happy question that had suggested itself to Jerry during his anxious planning how he might outwit his rival.

"For five hundred dollars cash," said the professor, without a moment's hesitation, "I will land you at Idyl Wyld, alive or dead, between sunrise and sunset on the first day of June."

Equally quick came Jerry's response. "The figure you name proves that you are a high flyer, but the prize I am after is worth it."

An agreement was accordingly drawn up, duly signed by both parties, and after Jerry had cautioned the aviator that "mum" was the word, he proceeded to purchase a wedding ring, and calmly awaited the day.

Minds of lovers, like those of great men, frequently run in the same groove.

On the afternoon of the very day that Jerry had arranged for his journey by air-line, the aviator was visited by Tom.

"How much to land me at Idyl Wyld on June first and keep the agreement strictly secret?"

"Five hundred dollars cash, and I'll keep mum as an oyster."

With the agreement duly signed in his pocket, he felt so sure of success that he, too, proceeded to a jewellers where he made a

"confidential" purchase. As a matter of fact he also felt just a little pity for Jerry.

All this happened in the last week of May, which gave the professor ample time for a trial flying trip to Idyl Wyld to select a suitable place for landing his valuable cargo as per contract.

* * * * * * *

When Jerry arrived at the professor's headquarters with his marriage license in his pocket, he was laughing in his sleeve at the march he had stolen on his rival. He had already won first chance for a license, and now he felt so sure of winning Lillian that he almost pitied Tom.

The aviator greeted him cordially, but wasn't quite ready to start. Something about one of the wings wasn't just right, he explained, and he was giving it the necessary attention.

Five long minutes passed, and his passenger was growing impatient.

"It is better to start right than to have a break-down and perhaps a broken neck," said the aviator.

Three minutes more, and still the professor wasn't ready.

Suddenly a streak of dust was seen to rise far down the street, and the next moment Tom came into view. With his head bowed low, pedaling for dear life, he didn't notice that another passenger was waiting.

Tongue-tied, the astonished rivals stoood gazing at each other for a full minute. "What a fool I was not to make it a condition that there should be no other passenger," was the unspoken thought that flashed through the mind of each.

It was Tom who first found voice: "No use, old boy, you can't lose me."

Jerry's reply was cut off by the "all aboard," from the professor. Motioning Tom to a seat at his right and Jerry to one at his left, he took his own place while his assistants gave the machine a start. They were quickly in the air, and soon headed toward Idyl Wyld, speeding at the rate of a mile a minute over villages, fields, and forest. The day was perfect, the air still, the flight most successful, but not a word was spoken.

Shortly after noon, while Miss Lillian was engaged in gathering a bouquet in her uncle's garden, she was startled by a strange, loud whirring noise overhead. Looking upward she almost doubted her eyes as she beheld a descending aeroplane carrying three men, rapidly passing over the house. Hastening to the piazza to get a better view, she saw the machine coming lower and lower and alight in a pasture about a quarter of a mile distant.

The next instant all was clear to her, as she recognized her lovers, as they came sprinting "cross lots" towards her. Ignoring the public road, on which the pasture and house fronted, the rivals chose a short cut in their efforts to be first at the goal. As Lillian, with throbbing heart, stood watching the mad race over a newly-plowed field, through barbed wire fences, and over a rocky stream, her astonishment gave way to a loud burst of laughter, and when, a few moments later, the breathless lovers appeared, neck to neck, before her, each tending his license, they resembled a pair of football stars, emerging from a scrimmage, rather than nattily attired would-be groomsmen. Quickly regaining her composure, she announced her decision: —

"It is a dead heat.

"But," she continued, "you are in time for dinner, which will be served at two o'clock. This will give you time to brush up a bit, and my uncle, here, to whom I take pleasure in introducing you, will be glad to look after your immediate wants."

Miss Lillian returned to the piazza, where presently she was confronted by the professor, who had wisely chosen the road.

"I called to inquire," said he, "if either or both of your visitors desire to make the return trip with me. They engaged me merely to bring them here and left me so hurriedly that I had no opportunity of asking them if they wished me to carry them back."

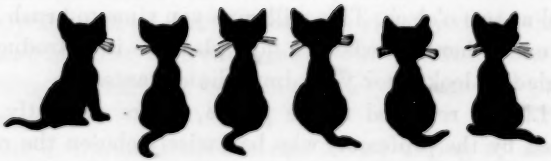
Miss Lillian was impressed with the young man's fine face and courteous bearing, and when, after a brief chat, he laughingly asked her if she would like to take a little spin in the air just as an appetizer for dinner, she accepted without a moment's hesitation. Proceeding to the pasture lot the pair were soon soaring cloud-ward, a number of ruralists, whose curiosity had attracted them to the strange machine, having given them the necessary send-off.

Overcome by the fascination of the novel experience, it was some time before Miss Lillian found words to express her delight. The conditions were ideal for an exhibition flight, and the professor quickly proved himself an adept in aerial gymnastics as well as a most agreeable fellow traveler. It took but a few questions to develop the fact that both had mutual friends at the colleges which they had attended. And they had not been amid the clouds half an hour when Miss Lillian found to her joy — what thousands have found too late — that the girl who cannot decide between two suitors loves neither of them well enough to become his wife.

She married the bird-man.

The rival lovers?

Very generously the professor consented to carry them back to the city that afternoon, without money and without price, as he put it.



A Tale of Visualization.*

BY FLORENCE FOSTER WILLARD.

HEN she had her christened Martha Jane, her mother might have known that she had foredoomed her daughter to spinsterhood. Not only was Martha Jane Wilson a spinster, but at the time of her remarkable success at Visualization, she was nearer sixty than fifty, an age at which the best of us must arrive,— if we live long enough.

However, Martha Jane did not look, nor for that matter, feel as old as women at her time of life used to be expected to. Her teeth were her own and nature's; her hair was brown and abundant, but lightly threaded with silver. Her figure was slim, trim, erect, yet not wholly lacking femininity in its lines. Being a woman, these outward signs of lingering youth were a source of secret satisfaction to her and partially reconciled her to life as she had always known and still knew it; for never yet had it met her demands. She was as full of unsatisfied ambitions, unslaked thirsts, and unappeased hungers as an egg is of meat.

Under its hard shell of spinsterhood, which her sensitiveness and pride had secreted for her protection, Martha Jane's heart was warm and tender to man, woman, child, bird and beast. It was, as has been said, a famished heart that never had fed on Love's golden ambrosia, hence much credit is due Martha Jane for its warmth and tenderness at her time of life.

But we must not make the mistake of supposing that the supreme desire of this heart was for a "soul mate." If the casual observer would never have divined the warmth and loyalty of heart under Martha Jane's severe tailored exterior, so her seething mental activities would have also remained unguessed, as she intentionally concealed them from the skeptical or derisive gaze of uncomprehending indifference. Martha Jane's mind, though

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one the school men would have classed as "untrained," was omnivorous in its appetite for knowledge, with an imaging faculty, or imagination which, for facility of free flight in unfamiliar, even forbidden fields, would have ranked the quiet spinster with Poe or DeMaupassant, had she not lacked their genius for depiction.

An active mentality to which her outer life gave small scope and her dissatisfaction with that life, made it inevitable that Martha Jane should become enamored of "New Thought." To her as to thousands of others, whose lives are hard or colorless or both, "New Thought" was a light shining in darkness; a fountain cool, pure, sparkling in the desert; Heaven-sent manna in the wilderness.

But "New Thought" has many phases, many departments, one might say, some one of which will appeal to the student and devotee because it best meets her need or is best in accord with her temperament. Naturally, the "New Thought" claim that one can visualize one's desires into actuality met the whole-souled endorsement of Martha Jane's athletic imagination. Such sentiments as: "Spirit is substance which forms itself according to your demands and must have a pattern from which to work. A pan of dough is as willing to be made into bread as biscuit. It makes as little difference to Spirit what we demand," sounded an imperious challenge to Martha Jane's powers to put them to the test and the thing she desired with all her soul was — Money.

Avid reader as she was, of papers and magazines, what most fascinated her was accounts of great sums of money passing from hand to hand. She marveled at the golden floods let loose at the race track and in gambling palaces. She read of the almost unbelievable amounts liberated from, no one knew where, to buy votes and corrupt weak legislators. Especially was her attention caught and held by a bit of testimony which came to light in connection with a certain senatorial investigation in a middle western State. A witness testified that the share of swag destined for one of the corrupted by the corrupters, was placed in a grip and hidden in a cornfield far from the capital, where the guilty party could creep in secret and seize it, all unknown to any one.

Why, Martha Jane asked herself, could not at least one little

rivulet of this flood of gold be diverted to her own virtuous and needy pocket? Why should the unworthy alone toss carelessly from one prodigal hand to another, these glittering piles of coin, while a deserving woman like her starved for all that made life full, complete and worth living?

She vowed to herself, in the strength of her vivid imagination and the sanction accorded to her resolution by "New Thought," that it should not be. She would invoke the power of visualization in her own behalf.

Coincident with the formation of this resolve, and without conscious effort on her part, there appeared before her mind's eye, a black hand-bag. It was of dull black leather, such a bag as men often carry when traveling. Its lock and other fittings were of brass. It had a fat, round handle, intended for a firm, masculine grasp. As this bag presented itself to the keen mental vision of Martha Jane, it was not new; it had seen some service, though it still had an eminently respectable appearance. But that which held her fascinated, hypnotized, almost, was this: The bag was open; it was about half full of tumbled packages of paper money. One of these packages was standing obliquely on end, above its companion packages, at about the middle of the bag, thus differentiating this from other bags containing tumbled packages of paper money and marking it as peculiarly Martha Jane's own.

It followed that this respectable and substantial hand-bag, with its still more respectable and substantial contents should make irresistible appeal to this temperamental spinster's remarkable visualizing powers. Besides, it had come unbidden, hence was to be regarded as "a leading" not to be set aside. Martha Jane resolved to concentrate all her powers of visualization upon this desirable object.

Though born of conservative Connecticut stock, anchored by a timid and nonventuresome nature to its sterile native soil, Martha Jane had made her way across the continent. At the time of this attempt at visualization, she was fairly familiar with the principal cities of the Pacific Northwest and was living in the southwesternmost coast town of California.

From necessity, no less than from choice, Martha Jane was self-

supporting. It never occurred to her well-to-do relatives in the East to maintain her or even to supplement her own efforts in that regard. Doubtless they refrained from so doing as a delicate and sincere compliment to her capabilities, which were well known in the family circle she had deserted.

At the time of the visualization, Martha Jane was earning honest food, shelter and apparel, by caring for the four-year-old son and only child of a thrifty German pair who kept a thrifty German delicatessen and sausage shop. Though this industry consumed all their week-day time and energy, they were devoted to their little son, so that they confided him to the care of Martha Jane was tribute, not only to her ability, but to her trustworthiness as well.

That her visualizing efforts might not conflict with her responsibilities as vicarious mother to the little Heinrich, Martha Jane chose, as her time for "concentrating" upon and "holding the thought" of that interesting black bag, the hour between half past nine and half past ten o'clock at night, because her somewhat turbulent young Teuton was sure to be safe in Slumberland by that time.

Persistence was a Martha Jane trait, honestly come by from a long line of New England ancestry, so every night found her "concentrating" on the black bag and its coveted contents, and "holding the thought" that they must "come into manifestation" in response to her urgent demand. For three months, or to be exact, for ninety-three nights, with no break or failure in the continuity of her concentration, Martha Jane pictured the black bag and what it contained until it seemed to her that she smelt the pungent leather of the bag and felt the weight of its tumbled burden as she grasped the fat round handle in her slim, nervous, capable woman's hand. And each night, at the close of her concentration exercise, she devoutly thanked the "Law of Good" for her ownership of the bag and the swag, after which she retired to peaceful slumber.

To clearly understand what transpired on the ninety-third night of Martha Jane's visualizing labors, it will be necessary for the reader to "visualize" the house in which she lived and the room she occupied with her little charge.

The house stood upon a corner lot. It fronted a broad and busy thoroughfare running east and west. The east side of the house faced an unpaved, not much used residence street. The west side was darkened by the close proximity of another house, between which and the one in which Martha Jane lived, was a narrow strip of land, connecting with the busy thoroughfare at the front of the house and with the back yard through to the side street. Martha Jane's room looked out upon this bit of neutral ground between the two houses.

Martha Jane was as enthusiastic a believer in fresh air as she was in "New Thought," so, as usual, on this ninety-third night of her concentration, both windows of her room were wide open save for the wire screens. One of these screens covered the entire space of the lower sash and was snugly fastened to its place; the other, the one nearest the street, was light, movable, a folding screen, not more than eighteen inches high, and as Martha Jane had flung the sash as far up as it could go, there was, upon this memorable night, a wide, unobstructed space above the screen, between the room within and the neutral ground between the two houses without.

At about three o'clock in the morning, the little delicatessen heir was sleeping soundly behind a Japanese screen, to protect him from draughts, and Martha Jane had awakened and was dreamily contemplating the preparation of an eye bath in her little blue eye-cup for her rather weak eyes, when she suddenly came to attention, every sense alert.

From the direction of the town came the flying footsteps of some fugitive, while ponderously in their wake, resounded the elephantine tread of a policeman, accompanied by the cry of "Halt!" then a pistol shot. But the headlong flight of the pursued was not interrupted, either by the command or the shot.

Then, quickly, with the springing bounds of the runner, she heard his hard breathing. The impact of thin soled shoes upon the pavement of the street ceased. The fleeing one had left the thoroughfare for the space between Martha Jane's house and her neighbor's. He was abreast of the window with the movable screen. Hardly pausing in his flight, he tossed a bulky object over the screen into Martha Jane's room. She heard him clear

the low back gate at one leap, then the sound of his footsteps was lost, as she surmised, in the dusty side street, or perhaps it was smothered in the laborious gallop of the policeman's official leathers that thumped ponderously by, too late for their owner to know that his quarry had "cast aside every weight" that might imperil his chances of escape or incriminate him if captured.

After all was quiet once more, Martha Jane arose. With deliberation she drew down the shades and lighted the gas, glancing at the crib to be sure that little Heinrich still slept, then looked for the object the runner had thrown into her room.

It was a gentleman's dull black leather hand-bag, with a fat, round handle and brass lock and fittings. It was open; it contained tumbled packages of currency, one of which stood obliquely on end at about the middle of the bag, indicating that the fugitive, while in flight, had opened the bag and taken out some of its contents,— not pausing to close it before he threw it from him into the concealment of the room to which his quick eyes saw access, so that it might not handicap him in his race with law and so the policeman would not see it, as he might have done, had it been dropped by the wayside.

All this was plain enough to Martha Jane. But clearer still was the astounding fact of the power of faithful visualization. It was her black bag in every particular. With a triumph impossible to describe, Martha Jane exulted, there in the loneliness of her room, over every trivial detail of her treasure which she had so often marked and identified in her long, persistent hours of "concentration." Before she counted, or even touched the wealth the bag contained, she dropped on her knees and with reverent eyes lifted to the ceiling, and a heart full of awed joy, thanked the "Law of Infinite Good" for its fidelity to her demand.

The morning papers reported the futile pursuit of a "suspicious character" but made no mention of any lost money; and as Martha Jane was sure that what had been intended for some wicked grafter or other evil doer, had been, by the operation of a law, both natural and divine, bestowed upon her, she kept her own counsel and — the currency.

She Hands Mack Violets.*

BY DONALD A. KAHN.

HEN Marcia Merideth came West with her newly acquired A. B. degree to work for a Master's at our university and to assist the rhetoric professor in reading our themes, the whole class, including the professor, promptly fell in love with her. She was twenty, she was pretty, she was clever, she was witty — and she knew her business.

The Junior Prom' at our university is the one big social function, so naturally, at the start, all the fellows aspired to take Miss Merideth to the Prom'. But it proved that the pretty reader found frequent occasion to cite Lindsey Murray's grammar and to recommend the dictionary, which was not only disconcerting from a scholastic standpoint, but tended to throttle our natural eloquence. One can't talk freely when he is wondering about his diction.

Only two of the boys seemed to stand any show at all — Jack Jamison and Mack McAllister. Their themes were royally received. They boasted not only uniform "A" grades, but favorable marginal comments as well. Emboldened by scholastic success, Jack often essayed to take Marcia driving, and Mack to show her the wonders of his birch-bark canoe. Four months after school started these two alone remained in the lists. The rest of us, including the professor, retired in their favor. But even the fact that Professor had been vanquished along with us was small consolation.

Tuesday and Thursday afternoons Miss Merideth held consultations in the rhetoric room for the benefit of those who might wish to consult her about their work. Regularly each Tuesday Mack put in an appearance. Thursday was Jack's day. Like

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sensible youngsters, they had made this equitable arrangement.

The visitor would manage to arrive about two-thirty, and, someway, Miss Merideth would be kept in consultation until an hour past the set time. She would be asked to discuss everything and anything — except rhetoric. Then, at five, he whom the day favored would escort her to her sorority-house home. But neither, for several months, skilful and persuasive as both undeniably were, had been able to gain Marcia's acceptance to an invitation to the Prom'. She was much too busy with her studies to think of preparing to go, she said.

Although he did his best to avoid the subject, Marcia one Tuesday insisted upon discussing with Mack his rhetoric work. For reason enough Mack tried to dodge the subject. Jack, in exchange for sundry mathematical services, wrote all Mack's themes for him. Mack, though a fluent talker, simply could not write.

"I was much taken with the last paper you handed in, Mr. McAllister," remarked Marcia. "The subject was cleverly handled." Mack gazed into her wide, deep, soft, violet eyes, and swallowed.

"Thanks," he muttered, huskily.

"Your short stories especially are always exceptionally good," continued she, "yours and Mr. Jamison's." She looked at Mack, expecting, manifestly, some reply.

"Jack's better at it than I am," responded Mack — honestly enough. "He has no trouble selling his stuff. The editors just jump at it."

"Don't you ever sell yours?" asked Marcia. Mack shook his head. Jack gave Mack only class rights to the stories. He reserved title to the manuscripts and later marketed them under a nom-de-plume.

"I'm best at argument and exposition," Marcia told him, "but I'd much rather write fiction. I've always wished I could do stories."

"Stories are easy when you know how," Mack assured her. "I'm certain you could learn. They're a regular lead-pipe cinch — nothin' to 'em."

"Do you want to do something for me, Mr. McAllister?" she

asked, archly. Looking into the wide, deep, soft violet eyes Mack fervently felt that dying for Marcia would be a mere pastime. "Write a story for me, right now, right here, so I can watch and see how you do it!" she requested. "Maybe I could learn that way. You're such a master at it."

For a moment Mack scratched the edge of his ear, thoughtfully, and then a ghost of a grin lurked in his features. He knew jolly well he never could write a short story — even for Marcia Merideth.

"Why, I'll tell you," he started to explain. "You'll laugh; I know it's funny. But I'm a queer sort of cuss. I can't write unless the shades are half drawn, just up enough to give a hazy kind of light, and everything — shadows, you know. And I can't do myself justice unless I have a bunch of violets in front of me on the desk. And I can't work unless I'm alone in the room. It interferes with my, my, my — artistic temperament. Funny, isn't it?"

Marcia regarded Mack with positive admiration. She had known hosts of others, had Marcia, but Mack had them all easily beaten. With difficulty she suppressed a smile.

"Violets? How would these do?" she asked, and drew from her belt a bunch that the desk had hidden. Mack wished he had made it chrysanthemums. "You can arrange the window shades just as you like them," she continued. "And I'll leave you here in the room all alone." She looked full at Mack and smiled quaintly. "So your artistic temperament won't be interfered with," she added. "When you're through bring your story into the outside room. I'll be waiting for you there." She left him.

So soon as the door was closed Mack whistled several bars of a popular waltz, danced the beginning of a horn-pipe, and then grinned at his predicament. He walked over to the open window, not to adjust the shades, but to peer out. Mariners stranded on a floating plank have actually been rescued, thought Mack. Why give up hope? One glance at the passing throng showed Mack that luck was with him.

"Jack!" he hissed. Jamison, outside, stopped dead still in his tracks, dropped cigarette in his surprise, and looked up to where Mack was leaning out. "Where you going?" asked Mack.

"Post office," replied Jamison. "Just pounded out a lulu for Hamilton's Magazine. It's a blinger, believe me. Fellow meets a girl and falls dead in love with her — real affinity business. Turns out that she's the finished edition of a baby he rescued from in front an approaching trolley when they were a couple of kids. Lots of heart interest and a couple rip snorting love scenes. Robbie W. Chambers is bounding up against a rubber fence beside of me. Ought to bring at least fifty bucks, and the Lord knows I need the money," stated the author, with becoming modesty.

"Give muh de cheild!" ordered Mack, his voice nicely fixed between command and entreaty. "I need it in my business, old man. I'll bring it back to you to-night." Remembering a double assignment of trigonometry problems to be handed in on the morrow, and cognizant of Mack's ability as a juggler of figures, Jamison mutely surrendered his precious manuscript and shuffled on. Mack assiduously set about to copy the story.

In a half-hour he appeared before the pretty reader with the story — and a smile. "It's rather punk," he apologized, tendering her his copy of Jamison's masterpiece, "but I rather rushed it through. Didn't want to keep you waiting longer than was necessary, you know." He assumed an easy pose, while Marcia read Jamison's story. He noticed that her bewilderment increased as she read, and wondered.

"Pretty fair?" he suggested, genially, when the girl was through the last sheet.

"Your love scenes are perfectly charming," she declared. Her fair brow wrinkled in perplexity. She bit her lip cruelly, troubled that she had been able to doubt him. Then she confessed.

"I don't know why, but we suspected the themes you handed in were not your own work," said she, "and Professor Haughton asked me to test you this way — by asking you to write a story extemporaneously. It was Professor Haughton's suggestion — I'll have to explain to him how wrong he was. I'm awfully sorry that I doubted you, Mr. McAllister. I feel terrible about it. Will you forgive me, please?"

Mack looked into the wide, deep, soft, violet eyes — and forgave her.

"Will you go to the Prom' with me?" asked Mack, following his advantage promptly. "I'd just love to take you — I don't feel hard at all."

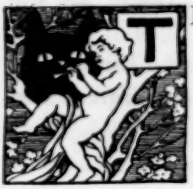
"Gladly," she accepted. "I'm grateful that you're not displeased with me."

Pretty fair writer, that Jamison, thought Mack. But he's no diplomacy, no diplomacy! He never would have forgiven her, if she had doubted him.

Eliza.*

BY MARY AND ROSALIE DAWSON.

(This story appeared in THE BLACK CAT nine years ago and is reprinted by request.)



THE way train, which had been speeding out of town at the rate of twelve miles an hour, came suddenly to a standstill with a violent recoil in crossing a country lane, and Revere, shaken out of his reverie, threw up the car window, quite prepared for a panorama of dismembered bodies.

But, as the view from the window revealed only an impassive stretch of green, without so much as one detached arm or leg, he settled back immediately to the consideration of a more important question.

SHE was a friend and neighbor of the Pottertons. There was a fairish chance that she might be seen at their house, since an invitation to see her at her own home had not been forthcoming. That ten minutes' tiff at the seashore where they met had not in the least detracted from her charm, though it had entirely demolished his welcome, and he would do much to be near her for a week — endure the Pottertons, even, for that length of time.

He was aroused again from his speculations a moment or two later by a perturbation at the end of the car. Glancing up, he found the neurotic little conductor in excited conference with passengers near the door.

A number of them were turning in their seats and pointing to something or some one down the aisle. It seemed to the young man that he himself was being indicated, and he caught the words, "tall, slimmish young fellow in the gray suit," a description, albeit imperfect, of himself.

A moment later the little conductor whizzed up to him.

"I beg pardon, Mister," he said, lowering his voice to a whisper, "but you have a bag there which looks as if it might have a musical instrument in it."

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"Why, yes," the young fellow answered in astonishment. "My banjo."

"A banjo! That's lucky! What toons can you play? Can you play 'Yankee Doodle'?"

"Jehoshaphat! Why, yes, I guess so, if worse came to the worst. But what in the name of patience —"

"Then you're the man we want, and we want you the worst in the world. This way, sir, please, and as quick as you can, if you don't mind. We can't move the car an inch till she hears 'Yankee Doodle.'"

"But what —"

"It's the only thing that will start her up. We've tried everything else. Pushing, pulling, everything. She sticks on the tracks like a coal wreck. I wouldn't bother you, but we're five minutes late already. You'll be doing all hands a great kindness if you'll come along and grind out a good lively 'Yankee Doodle.'"

Revere caught up his banjo case and hurried after the official, wondering, as he went, which of them had gone insane and whether the attack would prove to be a permanent softening of the brain, or merely a temporary aberration.

A number of passengers had left the car. They were gathered *en masse* around the portion of the grade crossing which intersected the lane. As he sprang down, banjo case in hand, the crowd caught sight of him, and gave him a couple of cheers.

"Now, then! Here comes Orpheus and his loot," cried a voice in the crowd. "Step lively, Orph, you're wanted."

For a moment the young man stared about him with ever-increasing fears for his own mental condition. Little by little a light broke in upon his brain.

A few yards only of track lay between the engine and the grade crossing. Squarely in the middle of the track at the crossing stood the obstruction, in full view. It was a small, antiquated pony phaeton drawn by — or rather attached to — a rotund white mare.

The animal was neither standing, the usual and approved attitude of her kind, nor prostrate, as will sometimes happen by accident in the best-regulated rigs! She was sitting upon her glossy haunches, a calm, almost *blasé,* expression in her brown-green

eyes. Beneath the expression of incipient *ennui,* the careful observer could detect a certain resolve, or obstinacy. Her fore feet, with their trim, slim fetlocks, were firmly braced against the rails.

The carriage was occupied by two women. One of them, a stout, elderly maiden-aunt-like person, engaged in making voluble explanations to a delighted crowd. The other, a Girl in White who leaned back among the cushions and laughed, in evident enjoyment of the situation.

At sight of the girl, Revere drew back with a little cry of astonishment under his breath. Then he ran forward, lifting his hat.

"Why, Miss Perry! I'm tremendously sorry to find you — ahem — delayed in this way. What is the trouble? Can I be of assistance?"

The pleasure which exuded from the young man's face was not reflected in that of the girl. She stopped laughing, drew herself up from the cushions and yielded him three slender fingers, which he was allowed to hold for a fraction of a second, after which they were immediately withdrawn.

"How do you do, Mr. Revere?" she said, "I'd no idea you were in this part of the country. No, so far as I am concerned, you can be of no assistance, I think. If the train people want to try any experiments, of course they are welcome to do it for the sake of getting the train in motion. Aunt Milly," she added, turning to her companion. "You have heard me speak of Mr. Revere. My aunt, Miss Blithe, Mr. Revere."

Miss Milly grasped his hand with a warmth which was in striking contrast to the chilly demeanor of her niece. "So glad to make your acquaintance, Mr. Weaver. Though I must say the circumstances are not those I would generally like to meet people under. Such an embarrassing position. I wouldn't have had it happen for the world. I never thought of Eliza behaving this way on a railroad or I should have been afraid to drive her. You see, Eliza has not sat down in years now, and we thought she'd quite forgotten it. She is an old circus horse, as you may imagine, though I'd no idea of that when I bought her. It isn't Eliza's fault, really. She thinks she's doing perfectly right, you know. They taught her to sit down at the circus, and not to get up till she heard 'Yankee Doodle,' and she never will get up until she

hears it. You can pull, or push, or whip her, anything. These poor men have tried everything to move her now, but she won't budge, except to that tune. When I first bought her she sat down all the time — so often that my niece positively refused to drive with me. I myself never drove out without a mouth organ under the seat there with the hitching strap, so that I could start her up whenever she became obstinate. But of late she never thinks of doing it and the coachman's children have carried off the mouth organ, leaving me helpless, though I must say I would have let them have it if they had asked me, as I never thought I should have to use it again, and they are really dear children, and a comfort to their mother, who was my former maid Susan."

"Lady," cried the conductor, elbowing up. "We are ten minutes late, now!"

"Ten minutes late. How sorry I am! But, as I was just telling our friend Mr. Weaver here, this would never have happened if the coachman's children had not thoughtlessly removed the mouth organ from the place where I always keep it under the seat. It is most unfortunate in every way that Eliza should relapse just now, when she has not sat down in years. Things always do happen that way, though. I remember how it was the day poor Marion married. The house was crowded with guests and every one of the family had his hands full, so of course the pipes burst and flooded the kitchen, putting out the kitchen fire in the range and delaying the wedding breakfast — the cooking of it, at least. And then, after the ceremony, we had a thunderstorm and the lightning set fire to the barn, and an old tree that had weak roots was blown down and struck the house. And the groom had to turn out and help extinguish the barn, so that they couldn't go on their tour till the next day. It was just like Eliza remembering about sitting down this morning when I am on my way to the station to take the train to the city to see my old friend Amelia Lewes, intending to let my niece drive the phaeton home. But now I shall be afraid to let Barbara return alone, and Amelia Lewes leaves the city for California at one o'clock and I would give the world to see her as I may never see her again for years, as she may stay out there for her husband's health, which is in a bad way through the weakness of his lungs,

I believe — at least, the cough seems to point that way — "

"I am only going around the curve to the station," Revere suggested. "I am en route for the Pottertons. It would give me great pleasure to see your niece safely home."

He spoke in the most casually polite of tones, but a malicious something lurked in the eyes that looked at Miss Milly for an answer, and resolutely ignored Miss Milly's niece.

"There is no need in the world of any one accompanying me," said the young lady with great decision. "Eliza would not hurt a fly. I really prefer driving alone."

"That is like you, Barbara. You are always so brave," cried Miss Milly. "But remember, love, that I am older and more nervous. I wouldn't have a moment's peace, if I knew you were alone with Eliza now she is behaving this way. I wouldn't enjoy seeing Amelia, or anything, though I must say it is hardly an occasion to speak of enjoying yourself when you are saying goodby to one of your oldest friends, maybe for years, and knowing that she may be a widow when you do see her again, if you do. Still, I should be comfortable, at least, if I knew you had a man to protect you on the way home, and since Mr. Weaver so kindly offers, I accept for you, Barbara, and I insist on your availing yourself of his kindness."

"You are perfectly right, Miss Blithe. It would not be safe, to say the least, for Miss Perry to attempt to return home alone. And, far from inconveniencing me, it would be a great pleasure," urged the young man. He seated himself on a fallen tree trunk and stripped the cover from his banjo, keeping his eyes fixed on a portion of the landscape where, because of the angle of vision, it was impossible for them to encounter the eyes of Miss Milly's niece.

The young lady continued her protests, which were promptly drowned by a torrent of insistence from her aunt.

A moment later, a particularly vivacious "Yankee Doodle" enlivened the somnolent country atmosphere. Something in the exultant strains of the melody caused Miss Barbara to gather her pretty brows.

Eliza, however, was unfeignedly pleased. At the first notes her ears twitched, assuming an upright attitude suggestive of earnest attention. At "Along with Captain Goodwin," she turned her

head and regarded the player with what appeared to be unqualified approval. Slowly gathering her forces together, she rose in a dignified manner at the first chorus, and drew the phaeton lightly from the track.

The spectators cheered. The train men shouted a warning "All aboard!" a general scramble for seats ensued and Miss Milly had just time enough to ensconce the new protector in the seat she herself had vacated before being assisted to the platform of the car.

When the last car of the six had rounded the curve and become lost to view, with Miss Milly's handkerchief fluttering like a white moth from one of the rear windows, Miss Perry gathered the reins.

"Do you mean," she said, addressing the empty air directly in front of the phaeton, "that you will continue to force yourself upon me the entire distance home?"

"I promised Miss Blithe to take you home in safety, and of course I mean to fulfil my promise," returned the empty air in a tone that was provokingly good-humored and content.

"But my aunt is gone now with a perfectly easy mind. A child of two could drive Eliza. Nothing could possible happen to me and I really prefer going alone."

"I couldn't reconcile it with my conscience. You might meet with some accident, and then how could I face Miss Blithe? One never knows what will happen — especially in driving ex-circus horses. Had you one idea in a thousand when you drove Eliza out this morning that she would sit down on a railroad track in front of a train? I don't believe you had. You don't know a bit more about what she will do next."

"If you are determined to be so horrid, the best thing I can do is to get home as soon as possible," remarked the young lady, as she tapped Eliza into a brisk trot.

For some moments they drove on in silence. When the voice came again from the left hand of the phaeton, it had undergone a change. It was positively humble.

"Please don't be so hard on me," it pleaded. "The temptation was really too much — a whole ride with you when I'd been trying for weeks to see you, and couldn't. I had come down with

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"Please don't be so hard on me," it pleaded. "The temptation was really too much — a whole ride with you when I'd been trying for weeks to see you, and couldn't. I had come down with

the hope of seeing you at the Pottertons, and then, finding you there with this vacant seat, and Eliza — misbehaving — and your aunt nervous, it was more than a man could withstand. St. Anthony's trials were nothing to it."

As the whip-hand side had nothing apparently to add to the conversation, the left-hand resumed:

"You don't know how sorry I was about that affair at the shore, and how I suffered after I cooled down. I admit it was all my fault, and I wrote to you begging you to forgive me. But you sent the letter back unopened. Isn't there something I can do to win back your good opinion? I'd do anything you say, no matter what."

"You might get out of the carriage and allow me to go on alone. I should really appreciate that," said the whip-hand with instant readiness.

Whatever the left-hand intended to say in reply went unsaid, for, at this point, the phaeton suddenly shot forward, half unseating the occupants, and rendering them temporarily speechless. For a moment it wavered, then slowly righted itself, and remained motionless. Eliza was sitting down again.

Revere fell back upon the seat and howled. The situation soon proved too much for his companion, also. They laughed together until Eliza cocked her ears in astonishment at this unseemly mirth.

"Good old Eliza!" cried the young man when he had partially recovered. "She knows a thing or two. She won't budge a step until I play 'Yankee Doodle,' and I swear I will never play a note of it until you invite me to accompany you the rest of the way."

"You won't take a mean advantage like that, surely?"

"Won't I though?"

"But that is most unfair."

"All is fair in war and —"

"Please play," she interrupted quickly.

"Not a note. Are you going to invite me?"

"I am not. I shall start Eliza without your help."

The attempt to set Eliza in motion by alternate kindness and discipline was a failure. Eliza remained placidly indifferent to either argument. Even a carrot, surreptitiously obtained by her

mistress from a vegetable garden on one side of the way, failed to tempt her from her position. And Eliza had a weakness for carrots.

At the end of fifteen minutes Miss Barbara returned to her seat, exhausted in resources and patience.

"I suppose I must accede to your unjust demands," she said. "Or I shall be here permanently."

"Do you invite me of your own free will to accompany you home?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

"Cordially?"

"You never said it must be cordial," she protested.

"It must certainly be cordial," he responded firmly.

"Well. Cordially, then."

"I am entirely at your service," he answered, opening the banjo case.

Five minutes afterwards a rotund white mare jogged easily along a charming country lane drawing a phaeton which contained a man who laughed and a girl who protested, albeit not wrathfully, that something or other was a mean advantage and detestably unfair.

Get Bees.*

BY GEORGE S. COTTMAN.

WHEN Marcella and I read Maurice Maeterlinck's charming "Life of the Bee" we got the bee fever. We had taken up our suburban abode with a view to the simple, semi-bucolic life, which, of course, included chickens and garden, but here was something yet more idyllic which had about it all the flavor of pastoral antiquity, as Marcella said, recalling Hymettus and sundry Biblical references.

What could be more fascinating and refreshing than to study, day by day, the habits of these curious little creatures with their strange instincts? If you want to know how captivating they are read Mr. Maeterlinck — he better than I can key up your sense of wonder.

Then there is other bee literature from which you may learn about the profitableness of apiculture. I read some of that too, as I have a practical vein and always like to figure out things so as to establish an economic justification for my pleasures. In this case it figured beautifully. A swarm of busy little bees improving each shining hour gathering honey all the day from every opening flower meant in the course of the season (according to the books) eighty-two hundred pounds of that same delicious honey. All you had to do was furnish a modest little box of a home and they toiled for you joyously without money and without price. Lovable little creatures! Man's true friend!

About this time, by a happy chance, I learned of a man across town who had a stand of bees for sale. I went over and hunted him up. Yes, he said he had some, but bees were not in his line. Ever since his experience one day when he tried to shift them and twisted the super off and dropped the hive — ever since that day, he said, he had harbored a sort of prejudice against them.

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He was satisfied, however, that there was a heap of profit in bees. There was not only the honey, but there was an extra swarm every once in a while. A man beginning with a swarm could soon have an apiary. If I wanted these for five dollars I could have them, along with what honey was already in the hive.

From the bee knowledge I had gleaned I made a hasty calculation which tabulated itself somewhat as follows:

Minimum annual honey output per hive, 80 lbs. @ 20c. per lb.	$16.00	
Extra swarm of bees from parent hive (minimum estimate)	2.00	
Total annual yield		$18.00
Total cost (hive and original swarm)		5.00
Profit per hive		$13.00

I went over this calculation several times to be sure of it. It looked rather too good to be true — thirteen dollars profit in a year on a five-dollar investment was a return of 260% to say nothing of the subsequent multiplying of the capital by the increase of swarms. What better could any grasping capitalist ask? I took the bees.

That evening about dusk I went over with a wheelbarrow and a big sheet to bring home my incipient fortune. The man said that as I was inexperienced and might make some mistake he would, by way of favor, deliver the goods F. O. B., as it were. Not wishing to be out-done in courtesy I let him have his way. First he drove in with a smudge a large gob of the bees that were roosting out on the front stoop of the hive. Then he tightly caulked up the slot where they had entered, and after that spread the sheet over the barrow and essayed to lift on to it the plugged-up hive, which by this time sounded like an imprisoned sawmill in full operation. In lifting the concern he managed to pry open a gap where the super and the body of the hive joined.

At this junction my interest in the proceedings waned, and I went off to a remote part of the yard. My companion heroically stuck to his job till he could put the hive on the barrow and enclose the whole box with the sheet, carefully converting the latter into a big bag by the use of safety-pins. Then he came away, too. After whipping about in space with his hat and handkerchief for fifteen minutes he got a chance to stand and talk while applying salt, soda and ammonia. He was not in a frame of mind to talk

calmly and dispassionately, but he managed to say that the bees, much as he hated to part with them, were now mine and all ready to be taken away — that is, all but the few dozens that had crawled up his clothes instead of going in the sheet. So saying he presented me with a mosquito-net bag to go over my hat as a bee-veil, and said he hoped I would get them home all right. So I donned the mosquito-net and went off, feeling that I was at last what every man should be — a real bee owner.

Now my wheelbarrow was one of these scoop affairs in shape something like a shallow bowl, and as it jolted along the hive persisted in an attempt to describe a rotary motion, and ever and anon I had to stop and right it up. This performance, accompanied by the weird, wrathful buzz of the fermenting swarm, the ghostly, odd-looking shrouded thing in the barrow, and the equally ghostly-looking bee-veil that shrouded me, all indistinct in the gloaming, excited the curiosity of people along the sidewalk, and whenever I paused some one would come to the curb to look.

It was when I was traversing the main street of the town and the inquisitive stragglers became throngs that a score or so of bellicose bees found their way through the folds of the sheet. Safe behind my bee-veil I rather enjoyed it. In the midst of the ensuing panic a policeman came up. He was an ideal policeman — august of carriage, majestic in proportions, a ponderous embodiment of authority. He austerely noted the scatteration of the crowd and the odd, spectral appearance of myself and freight.

"Whatinell's all this?" he demanded raucously, punching the hive two or three times with his club. "I think I'll have to pinch you."

Happily for me he was diverted from his fell intent. First he swatted the air wildly with his locust; then he slapped his person heavily in three or four places; then he went away with great momentum and I got a chance to turn off into an alley, and after refastening the sheet, to wend my way homeward by more obscure thoroughfares.

I managed to get my hive safely planted and uncorked. The next morning when I examined it I found that the entrance slot was fairly flowing with liquid honey, while the bees that tried to get in and out were floundering about in the sticky stuff.

Visions of a wealth of golden honey floated before my mind and I hastened to tell Marcella about it.

"How nice!" she exclaimed, standing afar off and trying to see the flow of honey by the aid of an opera glass. "Why not," she suggested, "put a faucet in your hive, then you might pour some milk in at the top and have the famous old Biblical mixture right on tap. How much do you suppose is in there?"

"Well," I exclaimed, "there is supposed to be twenty-eight boxes in that super and from the signs it is simply brimming over. I'll get a smoker to-day and this evening we'll get it out."

"How nice!" said Marcella again. "I owe ever so many little favors to our friends, and now I'll just surprise them with some boxes of our own beautiful honey."

Wedging up the super so my bees could have egress without using the gaumed-up slot, I went off to the city about my business. That day a series of wild telephone messages were issued from my home in the attempt to locate me. Police headquarters, the city hall, the public library, and sundry business offices were all notified to waylay me if possible. Finally my orbit crossed that of the message. I was wanted at home. My bees had swarmed and they were being held in a state of siege by neighbors pending my return.

I was astonished, for though I had expected a division of the swarm some time I had not anticipated that my investment would, so to speak, double itself the very first day. This and my good fortune about the honey were encouraging indeed. I flew around to a bee-ware establishment to get an equipment for my new swarm. They sized me up there, and seeing I was progressive, introduced me to a fancy observation hive. The observation hive is a thing you can peer into through glass sides, "by means of which," as the catalogue says, "the life, habits and workings of bees may be observed with perfect safety." The device, I was told, was the coming fad, and when people once got interested in the fascinating stunts of bees it would become more popular than the phonograph. The price, complete, all varnished and with brass trimmings, "making an attractive piece of furniture for any room," was only $8.80.

It looked like plunging, at first glance, but I needed all the

information I could get about bees, and when I thought of my super full of honey, my new swarm, and that 260% on the investment I saw that I could indulge in glass sides and brass trimmings. Then there is no use trying to do business on a narrow-gauge way, so I got, along with a smoker, whatever was necessary for handling a swarm and removing honey, including a bee escape, some comb foundation and a patent swarm-catcher, amounting in all to three dollars. I also qualified myself with a lot of gratis instruction, then struck out for home with orders for the new hive to follow at once.

My bees had caused quite a commotion in the neighborhood. I had good neighbors, and they had prevented the swarm from wandering off into space by turning out with tin pans, bells, and a garden hose. The would-be migrants had settled in an adjacent yard, and the owner of the yard, who also owned the hose, had been faithfully watching them for hours with the sprinkling nozzle at hand.

According to the books, the bees should have been hanging pendent from the branch of some tree. My fly-screen swarm-catcher was made on that theory, the design being that they should be shaken into it and the wire lid shut down. Then you were to carry them to the mouth of the new home, beat a tattoo on the latter, and they would march from the catcher into the hive like the Children of Israel filing into the land of Canaan.

On that hypothesis I knew exactly what to do, but instead of hanging in a cluster they were massed about the stem of a small tree near the ground, and from this enormous nucleus they reached out in grotesque festoons to surrounding sticks and shrubs. The spot for a space of two feet boiled with bees, and those underneath must have been having a bully good time. How I was to get that seething welter into a swarm-catcher or anywhere else was more than I could guess, and there was nothing for it but to send an emergency call to a professional bee man in the city. Then I went to investigate the condition of the old hive.

"Huh!" said I, somewhat surprised.

Save a dozen or so that had perished miserably in the oozing honey, not a bee was visible or audible. Instead of "swarming," as I had expected, they had simply, one and all, decamped.

"Well," said Marcella, when I communicated this intelligence, "that gives us a good chance to get our honey out, anyway." Marcella has a habit of always looking upon the compensatory side. "I'm crazy to know how much there is," she added. "Do you think this will hold it all?" and she showed me a galvanized wash-tub, which she had nicely lined with clean papers.

We carried the tub out between us, and I proceeded to open up the super. It was as hollow as the head of its former owner, who had put the section boxes where the bee frames should have been and left the super vacant. The only vestige of honey in the hive was a thin, scrawny comb that had been suspended from the roof. The jolting of the barrow had broken this down, and what syrup there was had trickled to the bottom.

Marcella stood aghast.

"Oh, oh! You said there was honey there!" she cried, reproachfully. "What shall I do?"

It turned out that Marcella's little scheme for surprising her friends had so taken possession of her that she called them all up by telephone and told them about it, in consequence of which some six or eight of the elect were expecting to receive gifts of such honey as they never saw before.

There was only one way out of it that I could see; and so, as she seemed desperate about it, I skipped the back fence, sneaked up the alley that led groceryward, and betimes returned with ten boxes, which I had been lucky enough to corral. This added only two dollars to my bill of costs.

To the above, the visiting expert added one dollar more, but in the end the recalcitrant bees were nicely housed in their new hive, and I felt the yeast working in my spirits again. To be sure I was, up to date, fourteen dollars and eighty cents to the bad, over and above the first cost; but, as Marcella consolingly said, "one must always expect some reverses at the start, and no one need know about the grocery honey."

All this was on Saturday. The next morning our little bee troubles seemed to be settled and over with. Our bees in their fine observation hive promised to be a joy and an asset for all future time; and so, in a spirit of thanksgiving, Marcella and I went to church, the same being but a square away.

It was just as the choir and organ were in the midst of a swelling anthem that there suddenly struck in the infernalest accompaniment that sacred music ever had. An old-fashioned "calathumpian" band, consisting largely of tin pans and horns, was what it sounded like; and as it swelled from pianissimo to forte, and still more forte, the congregation pricked up its collective ears in amazement, while the choir showed signs of nervous demoralization.

As the unholy tumult was somewhere in the vicinity of my house, I put this and that together. It was up to me to sneak out and investigate, and I went, like a culprit, feeling myself the mark of every eye. To make the matter worse, they were just passing the collection baskets, and it always looks bad to get up and go when you see the basket coming your way.

When I reached home, red and hot, I found my surmise correct. The air around was literally full of crazy bees circling about, and my neighbor's boys, taking their cue from yesterday's proceedings, were kindly trying to settle my swarm. As it was the kind of performance to commend itself to a healthy boy, the orchestra organized and grew rapidly. I got a hearing by and by, and managed to abate the racket.

Then, in the lull, and before I could get my hose in sprinkling order, that vast whirling cloud of fool bees began to drift off slantwise, west by south, as if not quite certain whether to head for Texas or Southern California. As this meant several dollars' worth of tragedy to me, I followed, minus hat and coat. They went bee-line and I went around corners, so I was handicapped in the chase. At the edge of town I lost track of them entirely, and finally came back just in time to meet, in my half-clad condition, all the folks who were returning from church.

I wonder where my bees went. I hope some one else got them, and, if so, I wish him joy of them. Should this meet his eye I invite his attention to the attached ad:

FOR SALE — New observation glass beehive, quite new. Worth $8.80. Will sell cheap.

Moral: Get bees.

The Man Who Disappeared.*

BY EDWARD P. IRWIN.

THE first time I saw John Hampton after he disappeared from the knowledge and haunts of the old crowd in San Francisco, he was sitting cross-legged on the bare floor of a little stilt-propped hut in one of the sea coast valleys on the windward side of the island of Oahu, eating poi and raw fish with his fingers and reading from an old copy of Browning lying on the floor in front of him. That was two years after it was announced that he was married.

I just stumbled on him accidentally,— had no idea that he was within two thousand miles of Hawaii. With the announcement of his marriage he had dropped out of our lives completely, back there in the city. We didn't think much of it, — just supposed that he had gone the way of most married men, cut out the club and settled down into the ordinary humdrum citizen whose chief excitement consists in going for a ride on Sunday afternoons and who stays home and raises children and chickens the rest of the time, except when he is plodding along the dreary path of office routine to earn bread and butter.

Not that this is the sort of existence I should have predicted for John. But, as I said, we didn't pay much attention to the fact when he stopped showing up at the club, and gave it no particular thought.

But to discover him here, in this out-of-the-way corner of the world, engaged in such anomalous proceedings,— well, it was somewhat startling, to say the least.

I was on a horse-back trip around the island; had come down to spend a few months and collect material for a new story. I had spent the night with a friend who had a small farm near Waiahole, and intended to ride on to Waialua that day. It was about noon

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when I entered the little valley and saw the cabin ahead of me, in the midst of a clump of bananas and surrounded by taro patches and rice fields.

I was hungry and, supposing some family of Hawaiians lived there, thought I would stop and see if I could not get some kind of a meal. I rode my horse up to the open door and called out "aloha," the native greeting. Then, as my eyes became accustomed to the darker interior of the hut, I saw John Hampton.

He appeared to be much interested in the book in front of him, and did not hear me when I called the first time. I was so astonished that it was some seconds before I could collect my senses enough to repeat the hail. I jumped off my horse and walked up to the door and looked in. "Hello, John Hampton," I said.

He didn't get up, didn't even answer. He just looked. And such a look! During my life I have seen men under the stress of nearly all possible emotions, I think, but I never saw any other man whose face conveyed such an expression of mingled recognition, surprise, incredulity, guilt and absolute terror, as did that of John Hampton, sitting cross-legged on the floor of that cabin, his book in front of him, his hand half raised, the forefinger dripping poi which he had been in the act of conveying to his mouth. I suppose a man detected in the commission of some heinous crime and mortally shot in the same instant might die with such a look on his face. I hope I shall never see it again.

"In the name of all that's wonderful, Hampton," I said, "what are you doing here?"

"Eating my dinner," he replied in a flat voice.

The matter-of-fact, commonplace answer, combined with the indescribable look on his face struck me at the moment as being funny. Afterwards I thought of it as tragic.

As I continued to stare at him with a doubtful grin on my face, he appeared suddenly to recollect himself. "Won't you come in?" he asked formally. "And let me offer you something to eat. There isn't much variety, but if you have been riding long, I dare say you are hungry enough to put up with what I can give you."

He rose and held out his hand with the old-time gesture of the John Hampton I had known two years before. Something of his evident amazement had communicated itself to me, and I took his

out-stretched hand as formally as he offered it, and stepped into the room.

"I hope you are well," he said.

"Very well, thank you," I replied. "And you?"

"Couldn't be better," was his answer.

We were speaking in the manner we would have used two years previously if we had met at the club after not seeing one another for a week or so. The absurdity of the situation seemed to dawn on us both at the same instant.

"You — didn't expect — to find me here," he said with evident embarrassment.

"Hardly," I replied.

Neither of us was willing to go farther then and we both were silent for a few minutes. The situation was getting awkward for both of us when Hampton broke it by motioning me to sit down on the floor at his improvised table. The table consisted of some banana leaves spread on the floor, and on these were placed a dish of poi and some fish. From a corner of the hut Hampton produced another calabash of poi and set it before me. I dipped a finger in it, twirled the sticky mass around a time or two, to prevent its dripping off, and conveyed it to my mouth, and we both sat there, on the floor of that Hawaiian hut, eating Hawaiian fare. Neither of us said much and what we did say was commonplace and meaningless. We were both avoiding the subject which was uppermost in the mind of each.

When we had finished and washed down the food with a drink of abominable gin, I produced some cigars and we went outside and sat in the shade of the hut and smoked.

In the heavy silence that lay between us I had opportunity to review my acquaintance with the man who sat with me.

I had known him in the East, and afterward in San Francisco for several years. In fact, we were for a while quite chummy, principally on account of the fact that we both used to visit frequently at the house of the Mortons, before either of us went West.

There was a Morton girl, I remembered — a pretty little thing with large brown eyes, a mobile expression and ideas uncommon for a girl. I might have allowed myself to become more interested in her if it had not been for Hampton. I could see that his in-

terest was much more than a mere friendly one, and so I kept out.

As I thought of it there, in the shade of that cabin, looking off over the sun-lit rice fields to the sea, an intense, vivid blue in the distance, I remembered I had thought at the time that Hampton was more desperately in love than any man I had ever seen before. His very existence seemed to lie in the depths of those brown eyes; his gaze enfolded the petite figure of the girl in an embrace that seemed to shut her in with a flood of fire; his air toward her was the gentlest I ever saw in a man toward a woman.

As I looked back over it then in that Hawaiian Valley, and particularly as I recall it now, after hearing the story he told me there, I realize that John Hampton loved Clarise Morton with a love that few women have the chance to throw away as she threw his away. But I am anticipating.

Hampton was the one who broke the long silence. "I suppose," he said, "that you are wondering how I come to be here and what I am doing in this place. I have kept it all to myself too long. I must talk to somebody or —" He made a gesture toward his head. "I'll tell you about it."

He told me. I can't tell the story as he told it to me. Besides, it wouldn't be intelligible. The recital was disconnected, jerky, largely impressionistic. His gestures indicated whole chapters. The wave of a hand drew the curtain on parts of the story. His silences were filled with heartaches.

And he was silent often, and sometimes for long periods of time, during the telling. Sometimes he would stop in the middle of a sentence and fall to dreaming, apparently forgetting me entirely, and I knew he was back in the past with his memories. Then he would suddenly begin again.

The sun sank slowly toward the western *pali*. The shadows lengthened. The rice fields lay green and quiet before us; occasionally a vagrant breeze sent waves traveling across them like the gentle undulations of the summer sea. Wandering clouds cast grateful shadows on the earth, that moved silently towards us, wrapped us around for a moment, and passed on. A fitful breeze rustled the leaves of the banana plants at intervals and they gave out a sound that was the exact imitation of rain pattering on their broad surfaces.

My horse, hitched nearby, stamped impatiently sometimes, as if to tell me that it was time for us to be traveling if we were to reach our destination that day. But I was too intensely interested to think of leaving until Hampton had finished his story.

"You knew, of course," Hampton began, "that I loved Clarise Morton. That wasn't hard to see. But you had no idea — you couldn't have — how much I loved her. I'm not going to try to tell you. I can't. But I loved her more, I know, than any man ever loved a woman before. That's something that every man says about some woman, I suppose. But I know." His gesture was one of finality.

"I loved her for three years before —" He broke off and was silent for a time. "There never was but one woman for me," he resumed after a while. "The scattered loves of other men I put all into my worship of this one. And she knew it from the first. I told her I loved her within a short time after I first met her.

"I remember it all now. There was a winding river flowing between high banks, and down near the edge was a little nook shaded by a low bending tree and carpeted with rich grass. This was our own place. No one else knew of it and we used to come there on those wonderful spring days and lie for hours on the grass, watching the shadows pass like fairy craft across the slow flowing water before us, listening to the whispers of the wind in the leaves over head, or to the saucy chattering of the sparrows and the cheep of the insects in the grass on the steep bank behind us.

"And we used to talk. I'll not tell you what it was all about. I had the opportunity to look into the pure heart of a girl who was on the line of womanhood, and there are things in such a heart that no man dare discuss. No man ever penetrates into that sanctuary more than once.

"But the man who once gets a glimpse behind that curtain can never be the same man again that he was before. He has been touched with the sacred fire that burns there, and all the world is different for him.

"And there, in that leafy nook of our own one day I told her that I loved her."

Hampton fell silent again. It may have been minutes before he continued. It may have been an hour. I looked once at his

face, then turned away my own, for I had seen there the look that few men ever see on the faces of others. It is only women who are often permitted to see that look, and only one woman ever sees it in the face of one man.

The sun dropped behind the Western mountains and the long shadows spread to a homogeneous whole and lay like a pallid blanket over the silent earth. Night was approaching, soft-footed, inscrutable, beneficent. Hampton's face was lost in the darkness, lighted up only occasionally by the glow of his cigar.

"We were engaged," Hampton went on after a time. For three months I was with her every day. Three months! It was three centuries of life, that seemed to be compressed into three hours. Three months! No man before was ever so intensely happy for three months as I was. And then —

"I went away. Had to make a name for myself and a home for Her. We were to be married in three years. No sooner, for she wanted to prepare herself for our life together, a married life that was to be like no other had been in all the world.

"I wrote to her every day. She never wrote so frequently, for she didn't feel that it was necessary. Said that her love for me was so strong she could project it across space and time and make me feel its presence wherever I might be.

"And it was so. For two years it was always with me, night and day, and her letters but expressed what I knew so well without them.

"After a while I noticed that the letters were more infrequent. At first I thought nothing of it. I supposed she was busy getting ready for our approaching wedding, for I had written her that I would return for her in three months, to take her away with me. But after a time I noticed some strained quality in the letters. There was almost a tone of fright in them, as if the girl were terrified at something she saw or felt.

"A something like an arrow of ice pierced my heart. I couldn't wait to write to ask her what was the matter. I boarded the first train and went to see her. And then she told me."

In the darkness that had fallen I could feel that Hampton's face was gray and drawn. He stopped and for a long time said nothing. A huge gulf of silence seemed to envelope us, a silence quick with

the mystery of a strange land. The thrill of a tragedy was in the air about us, seeming to emanate from the quiet figure of the man beside me. He sat motionless. There was something almost ominous about him, as if he were the personification of grief.

The moon came up out of the eastern sea, full, pure, mystic. Its bright light flooded the earth with silver. A tall palm tree in front of us was silhouetted against its whiteness, motionless, delicate, spirit and emblem of the land itself.

Hampton went on as if he had not stopped, as if he had been speaking all the while and I had read his thoughts. I seemed to have been doing so, for I hardly noticed when his silence merged into speech again.

"I saw her frequently after I had lost her, for she, too, came West. You see, there was no other man. It was just that other things, new ambitions, new ideals, had come into her life. She thought there was a work for her to do in the world and that marriage would prevent her accomplishing it. And she wanted to be just my comrade.

"I thought for a little while that that was possible. I didn't know then. But I learned soon enough. There can be no such thing as friendship between a man and a woman unless each loves another. My days were days of anguish and my sleepless nights were torture.

"After a while she went away. But that made no difference to me. And the girl loved no one else. I knew that. I also knew that she would not change her mind. And yet I hoped without hope and knew there was no hope.

"I suppose it must have affected my head some. Certainly a man in his full senses would never have done the thing I did. But I felt that I could not stand it. I had to do something to end the situation, to make a definite, final conclusion.

"I wrote her a letter, lied to her. I said I had never expected to be able to love another woman all my life but I had learned my mistake. I had found one who had taken her place in my heart" — Hampton laughed a laugh that grated on me as if some one had plucked at a raw nerve — "and that I was happy now. We had been married a week.

"And in my crazy dream, in order to make the bluff good, I